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AUTHOR Lee, Jasper S.
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ABSTRACT

Intended to help Future Farmers of America (FFA) members develop skills in improving their communities under the Building Our American Community Program, this publication provides guidance on how FFA chapter members can be active citizens and use democratic processes. Section I, Identifying and Analyzing Communities, consists of four chapters. Chapter I suggests ways to determine community boundaries and identify community groups, occupational clusters, community memberships, and people and programs that make things happen in the community. Chapter II explores identifying community needs. Chapter III analyzes selecting community development activities. Chapter IV recommends methods for gathering and analyzing information. Section II, Group Decisions & Actions, looks at the establishment of a teen center and has three chapters. Chapter V explores alternative solutions to problem solving. Chapter VI develops guidelines to organize for action. Chapter VII suggests ways to evaluate the results of community action. Each chapter provides step-by-step activities and most chapters conclude with a glossary, a performance check list, and a bibliography of supporting references. (BRR)

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT-FFA STYLE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FFA members have been involved in both community building and community service activities. Their programs have involved all types of community leaders and organizations. In 1971, the National FFA Board of Directors approved the Building Our American Communities (BOAC) program which focused on the community development process. The program is designed to encourage members to study the role of community leaders, local organizations and local government.

In 1971, USDA developed the reference "Build Our American Communities." It provides the vocational agriculture instructor with an initial approach to classroom oriented instruction in the community development process.

Since BOAC was started, two instructional films have been produced. The first – "Building Our American Communities" gives an overall description to the BOAC program. The second film – "The Game Plan – FFA Tackles Community Development" provides a step by step approach on how key chapters have been successful in completing a BOAC program.

In 1974, special incentive funding was provided to the states to develop units of instruction in community development. As a result, several excellent units have been produced.

In order to combine the efforts of many states as well as utilize the best possible resources now available, the following National writing team was chosen to develop this handbook:

Harlan E. Ridenour, Professor
Curriculum Materials Service
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

Colvin Walker
Vocational Instructional Services
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas

Dennis Sargent
Assistant Executive Director
National FFA Foundation
Sponsoring Committee
Madison, Wisconsin

Delwyn A. Dyer
Extension Specialist
Community Resource Development
VPI & SU
Blacksburg, Virginia

Donald W. Littrell
Assistant Professor
Department Regional
& Community Affairs
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri

Jasper S. Lee
Associate Professor
Mississippi State University
State College, Mississippi

Frank Anthony
Associate Professor
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

Paul Vaughn
Vocational Agriculture Instructor
Bloomfield High School
Bloomfield, New Mexico

Jerry J. Klement
Coordinator
Rural Development Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Karl F. Munson
Program Leader
Community Resource Development
Extension Services
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

BOAC PROGRAM COORDINATORS

James L. Patrick
USDA-BOAC Coordinator
Farmers Home Administration
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Ted E. Amick, Program Specialist
National FFA Center
Alexandria, Virginia

EDITOR

A. Daniel Reuwee
Director of Information
National FFA Center
Alexandria, Virginia

The teachers plan handbook has been prepared by Jasper S. Lee, Associate Professor, Mississippi State University, State College, Mississippi. It has been reviewed and edited by the entire committee.

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The student handbook, teacher plan handbook and accompanying slide-tape audio-visual have been developed through the FFA's Building Our American Community (BOAC) Program, a special project of the National FFA Foundation, Inc. sponsored by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana.

INTRODUCTION

Freedom is a right and privilege we share as citizens of the United States. It is also a responsibility. America can remain strong only as long as we, the citizens, take an active interest in working to improve the communities which collectively form our nation. Through the people's voice of our democracy, we have a unique opportunity to work together in our communities to make them better places in which to live and work. In so doing we are assuring the future strength of our nation.

How can I be a good citizen, you ask. How can I help make democracy work? This publication is intended to help you develop skills in improving the community where you live. In the process, you will learn how to be an active citizen and use the democratic processes.

You can begin now thinking about your community. What is it like? What changes would you like to see? How can changes be made? How will these changes affect other people? Who are the key people who "make things happen"?

To help illustrate an effective approach to community development, the authors of this book have included examples of a successful community development program conducted by the Lake FFA Chapter. Members of the Lake Chapter used the procedures in this book to select, organize and conduct a successful community development project.

One of the outgrowths of including community development in your vocational agricultural curriculum should be the participation of your FFA chapter in the Building Our American Communities (BOAC) program. BOAC is a national FFA community development project. The focus of BOAC is on the local level—on your FFA chapter and what it can do. Your FFA chapter can receive an award for the improvements its members make in the community. See your Chapter Activity Handbook for a detailed guide to participation in the BOAC program.

SECTION I Identifying and Analyzing Communities

CHAPTER I. DEFINING YOUR COMMUNITY

What is your community? When asked this question, you may think in terms of a geographic location. This may be a valley, township, a county, a town or a city with fixed boundaries. This may be true, as far as the law is concerned or considering boundaries of your school district. However, consider your daily life and the people with whom you associate. Do your boundaries sometimes extend beyond local geographic boundaries?

In this section you should learn:

- To describe the boundaries of the community as they affect each chapter member.
- To identify community groups and organizations with whom the chapter might work.
- To identify the occupations of people in the community.
- To identify the different communities of which each chapter member is a part.
- To identify people and programs that "make things happen" in the community.

Determining the boundaries of the community:

The Lake FFA Chapter had its community service committee studying their community. They wanted to know what the chapter might do to make the community a more desirable place to live.

In trying to define what the community was, one member suggested that it was confined to Lake Township. Another member mentioned that his family attended church in Genoa. Genoa is a town about eight miles southeast of Lake Township. Someone else spoke up to say that people paid their taxes in Bowling Green. Several others said their doctors and lawyers had offices in the city of Toledo just north of Lake Township.

The committee decided that their community went far beyond the thirty-six square miles that make up Lake Township. In fact they decided that the boundaries of the community depended upon where the residents had common interests with other people.

As a result of this study the committee asked each chapter member to list the organizations, businesses, recreational facilities, and other activities in which they and their families were involved. At the completion of this activity they compared the lists. To their surprise, they determined that no two members lived in exactly the same community setting.

From this kind of study we find that community boundaries are determined by common bonds of interests rather than geographic boundaries on a map.

Determining groups and organizations within the community:

All communities have many different organizations which influence the lives of residents. The Lake FFA Chapter found that their community was no exception.

The community service committee thought it would be a good idea to identify the organizations within the community. They thought the chapter might work with some of these organizations to identify and conduct a community improvement project.

The chapter found that there were several youth organizations such as the FFA, FHA, HiY, 4-H Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. There were five different churches in the community, an FFA Alumni Affiliate and farmers were represented by the Farm Bureau Council, the Grange, and the vocational agriculture adult farmer class. Many community residents belonged to labor unions and professional groups and there were several civic clubs and a council of agribusiness managers.

The board of education had considerable control over the FFA chapter. Of course local public officials controlled the use of public property.

One important thing chapter members learned was that many persons belonged to several different organizations but a great many people belong to no organization. Thus the organizations listed did not represent all the people.

Determining the occupations of people in the community:

A person's occupation tells a lot about his or her background and interests. It is also an indication of the kind of skill that a person can contribute to a community improvement project.

Since members of the Lake FFA Chapter recently completed a study of community occupations, they had only to refer to their class notes to complete this assignment. The list identified cash grain farmers, cattle, lamb, or hog feeders, and dairymen as well as feed, fertilizer and farm equipment dealers and their employees. In addition there were greenhouse operators, nurserymen, garden center operators, a flower shop

operator, growers of specialty crops and the migrant workers who care for special crops. The survey also showed that many people worked in the surrounding factories, offices and banks.

There were also several professional workers such as doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers, and engineers.

In evaluating the list, members found that the people of the community had a great variety of skills that could be brought to bear upon community problems.

Determining the communities of which each member is a part:

It was easy for Lake FFA Chapter members to identify the geographic boundaries of their community. But social boundaries were more difficult to define. They were much broader than the geographic boundaries since the citizens of Lake Township were involved in a wide variety of activities.

One member mentioned that different people belonged to different organizations, worked in different places, and went to different places for their recreation. To get a better idea of the social boundaries of the community the Chapter decided to have each member list the organizations to which they belonged including place of employment, (at home or employed away from home), church affiliation; if any, favorite recreation areas, place of residence and the place where they did their shopping.

For example, one member reported that he was a member of a church in Genoa, belonged to the FFA and HiY in school, was a member of the Farm Bureau Youth Council, went swimming at Crane Creek, took his mother shopping in Toledo, bought his car in Stony Ridge south of Lake Township, took his girl friend to the movies in Toledo, and worked part-time as a carryout boy in a store located north of Lake Township.

The other members put together similar lists. In comparing their lists, it was evident that chapter members had only two things in common. They went to Lake Hi and were members of the Lake FFA Chapter. Most of the members went to church. About half of the members attend one of the five churches in the Township. The remainder of the chapter members attend churches outside of the Township. The same kinds of differences showed up when they compared the places where they worked, where they went to have fun, and the organizations to which they belonged. They concluded that while social communities are all different they do tend to overlap.

Determining what makes things happen:

Events in your community are controlled by a wide variety of factors some of which are clearly visible and some of which may not be immediately obvious. These factors include such things as local ordinances, government regulations of all kinds, labor union or special interest group influence, and financial considerations. In addition, some people, because of their special interests or resources, are strong forces in a community.

Just about every community is also affected by factors outside the community. For example, Federal policy and regulations have an effect on local agriculture. State laws, regulations, policies and programs such as state highways and school funding policies, all affect the local community.

Since many things that influence the local community are not controlled by the community, we must learn to determine how these external influences affect the community. Once aware of these influences, it becomes much less difficult to deal effectively with them.

Among the influential persons identified by the Lake Chapter were a banker, three farmers, an industrialist, the superintendent of schools, a feed store manager, a minister, a carpenter, a union official, a civil rights leader, and other people with wide political influence.

While chapter members recognized the capabilities and influence of community leaders, they also recognized the factors such as government regulations special interest groups, and financial needs.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

You've just seen how one FFA chapter identified the geographic and social boundaries of their community and how they identified their opinion leaders. This is the kind of information we must have to identify and carry out improvements within the boundaries of our community.

Determining the geographic and social boundaries of your community.

Now let's look at your community. Complete the following check list.

- ☐ Outline the geographic area of your community on the map.
- ☐ Locate the churches where members worship.
- ☐ Locate the recreation areas where people go for amusement.
- ☐ Locate the schools.
- ☐ Locate the major agricultural businesses.
- ☐ Locate the principal areas where people do their buying and selling.
- ☐ Locate principal places of employment.
- ☐ Locate where people transact their government business.
- ☐ Locate the headquarters for organizations to which people belong.
- ☐ Locate health facilities.
- ☐ Locate cultural facilities.
- ☐ Provide symbols for the organizations.

Conclusions:

After completing the above check list, *draw your own conclusions* concerning the geographic and social boundaries of your community. Compare the geographic boundaries of the community to the locations of the various organizations and places where people gather informally.

Determining groups and organizations within the community.

People with common interests and goals tend to form organizations through which they can work. People band together because of common interests in religion, education, business, civic, recreation, or any number of other reasons. These organizations have invisible boundaries which overlap each other and often extend beyond the geographic boundaries of a community.

Supplies and equipment needed:

1. The map completed in the previous exercise.
2. Yellow Pages of the telephone directory.
3. A directory of organizations and activities (if available in your community).
4. Resource persons, including ministers, county extension agents, teachers, officers in the Farm Bureau or other community leaders, who may be familiar with community organizations.

Performance check list:

- ☐ List the places of worship in the community.
- ☐ List the youth organizations of the community.
- ☐ List the community civic organizations.
- ☐ List the educational institutions in the community.
- ☐ List the recreation organizations.
- ☐ List the labor organizations in the community.
- ☐ List the farm organizations in the community.

Conclusions:

After completing your listing of organizations draw your own conclusions concerning the effect they have on the invisible boundaries of the community. How do you think these organizations affect the thinking and actions of people in the community?

Determining the occupation of people in the community.

Occupations are an indication of special skills and knowledge community residents can contribute to your program. Identifying those occupations can be a start for resource listing.

Supplies and equipment needed:

1. The Yellow Pages of the telephone directory.
2. Occupational studies made by the vocational agriculture class.

Occupations check list:

- ☐ Identify people engaged in the production of agricultural products by type of farming.
- ☐ Identify the businesses and jobs of those who supply farmers with the products and services required for production such as feed, fertilizer, or fuel.
- ☐ Identify the businesses and jobs of those who market or process farm commodities.
- ☐ Identify the types of factory, occupations.
- ☐ Identify service occupations such as auto mechanics, appliance repair, etc.
- ☐ Identify the professional workers such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, and others.
- ☐ Identify occupations in large business organizations.

Conclusion:

After completing the list of occupations within your

community draw your own conclusions as to the contribution each makes and how this affects the community in which you live.

Comparing the social communities of each Chapter member.

The social boundaries of the community can be better understood by comparing the social communities of several different people. In this case it is the chapter members who will be comparing their social communities.

Supplies and equipment needed:

1. The map developed in the first exercise.

Performance check list:

- ☐ List the organizations to which each member belongs including church and school as well as social.
- ☐ List the place where each member works.
- ☐ List the places where each member goes for recreation.
- ☐ List the places where each member does business.
- ☐ Compare the social communities of each member with the others.

Conclusion:

After comparing the social communities of each member with the others draw your own conclusions concerning the social boundaries of your community.

Determining the people who "help make things happen" in your community.

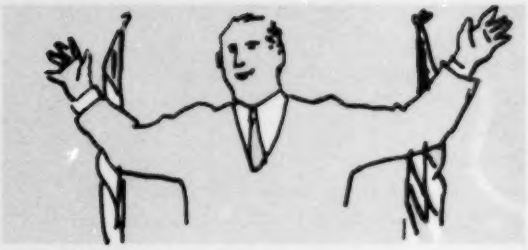
Each community has persons who have great influence in the community. Make a list of opinion leaders in your community.

Supplies and equipment needed:

1. The advice of someone, such as the sociology teacher, local farmer, businessmen, superintendent of schools, or others who plan and carry out programs within the community would be helpful.

Performance check list:

- ☐ List those who make things happen because of special knowledge and skills they are willing to share with their neighbors.



- ☐ List those who can make things happen because of their property holdings and other forms of wealth.
- ☐ List those who can make things happen because they manage an industry that affects the lives of many persons.
- ☐ List those who can make things happen because of their political position.
- ☐ List other factors that might influence decisions such as government regulations, ordinances, state policies, federal laws, etc.

Conclusion:

After completing your list of community leaders draw your own conclusions about the effect these persons have on the community.

Glossary

Community—A community has both geographic and social boundaries. The geographic boundaries may be the same as political subdivisions or determined by land and water features. A community is also made up of groups and individuals with common interests. These interests will often take people beyond the geographic boundaries of the community. Thus the social boundaries of a community are invisible.

Supporting References:

Del Dyer and Gene McMurtry, *4-H/CRD Youth in Action Improving Their Communities*, Publication 486, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Revised 1973.

L. H. Newcomb and R. Thomas Harp, *Chapter Membership*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210, 1974.

R. Thomas Harp, *Effective Committees*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210, 1975.

Paul R. Vaughn, *Working with Others*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210, 1975.

CHAPTER II. IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Most of us can look with pride to certain things in our community which make it unique and a good place in which to live. Likewise we can probably find a few things that we would like to see improved.

The FFA initiated the BOAC program because every community has room for improvement, and because working to improve communities can be a valuable experience in leadership and cooperation. Change in a community can take place only when the people involved see a need and have a desire to bring about the change. By participating in BOAC your FFA chapter might provide the spark that will cause the people of your community to conduct a community "self-analysis" study.

If your chapter decides to take part in the BOAC program, *the following steps will help identify the problems in your community:*

1. Have each class member list at least three things he or she likes about their community. When completed combine the lists.
2. Have each class member list at least three things he or she likes about other communities. When completed combine the lists.
3. Have each class member list at least three things in their community that they think need to be improved. When completed combine the lists.
4. Organize class members in teams to interview community residents. Determine what other people think about needs improving in the community. Ask these questions!

   What do you like about your community?

   What do you like about other communities with which you are familiar?

   What do you think needs to be improved in your community?

   When the interviews are completed, combine the lists obtained from the answers to the three questions.
5. Compare the three lists obtained from the chapter analysis with the three lists obtained from interviews with community members.
6. Consider differences in the two sets of lists that might be the result of age differences or differences in occupation and social experiences.
7. Identify the *five* items most often listed as needing improvement.

How do we identify community problems? Here's the approach the Lake Chapter community service committee used to identify their community needs.

Determining what we like about our community:

During one class period the teacher asked each student to list at least three things he or she liked about Lake Township.

The class made the following list of the things members liked about the community!

a. The conversion of the old municipal airport into a drag strip
b. The Crane Creek State Park beach for swimming.
c. The new basketball court at the high school building.
d. The level, productive land for farming.

Determining what we like about other communities:

Next, the class followed the same procedure listing things they liked about other communities. A few of the members had previously lived in other communities while all had visited relatives or traveled through other communities. They compiled this list because they knew that when faced with a decision most individuals or groups need to study what others are doing. The combined list included the following:

The teen recreation center in an adjoining community.

The lighted football field at a rival school.

The world seaport established at Toledo.

The new shopping center just opened north of Lake Township.

Each member also listed at least three things he or she would like to see improved in their community. The combined list included the following:

Nothing for us to do.

Highway patrol unfair to young drivers.

No jobs for young adults.

No young people involved in decision making.

Dangerous intersections where local roads crossed a new expressway.

Sewage flowing from residence and housing developments into open drainage.

Determining what other community members think about our community: From the first chapter of this book we learned that people were the most important part of a community. The FFA chapter is only a small part of the total community. To make things happen we must depend upon many other individuals and groups. Therefore, it is important that we learn what other people think about their community. We must consider their opinions as well as our own.

The FFA chapter community service committee again met with their advisor to plan the best procedure to follow in determining how people felt about their community. They decided that members need to interview people in the community to determine their feelings. The fourth activity was to organize into teams to conduct interviews with selected citizens.

Making a questionnaire. The main questions to be asked during the interview would be:

What do you like about your community?

What do you like about other communities with which you are familiar?

What do you think needs to be improved in our community?

Determining cross sections. It was apparent that the members could not take the time to interview all the people in the community. Using the lists of people and organizations developed when the chapter defined its community, the members selected a representative sample of people to interview. They selected people representing different parts of each neighborhood, as well as people representing different organizations, occupations, and interest groups.

Planning for the interviews. The class was divided into several two-member teams to conduct the interviews. After the interviewers became familiar with the questions, they were instructed to make appointments with the persons to be interviewed.

After the instructions were given, the interviewing teams took turns in role-playing their interviews in front of the class. Now they felt they were ready to conduct the interviews.

Reviewing interview results. After the interviews were completed, the class again followed the same procedure used in combining the lists assembled by the members for the first three activities. The teachers recorded on the chalkboard the answers received for each of the three questions. The combined lists for each question included the following:

What do you like about your community?

The Crane Creek State Park picnic facilities.

The paved roads in the community.

The productive farm land in the community.

What do you like about other communities with which you are familiar?

The public library.

The museum of art.

The Stony Ridge banking facilities.

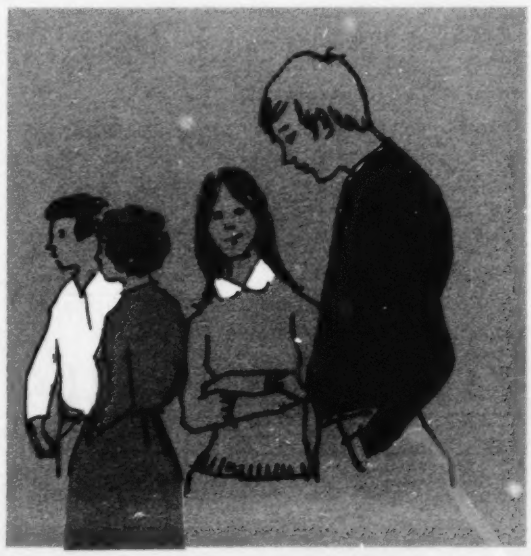
What do you think needs to be improved in our community?

The noisy drag strip at the old airport.

Poor police protection.

Urban sprawl starting in the community.

Not enough activities in the community for teens.



Poor fire protection.
Lack of cultural activities such as a library and organizations to promote cultural activities.

Determining common problem areas in the community:

During the next FFA meeting the community service committee led the discussion comparing chapter members' combined lists to those of community members surveyed.

A hot rod enthusiast was quick to notice the difference in opinion concerning the airport drag strip. Both groups were proud of the new high school, but apparently for different reasons. The older group tended to be more interested in cultural and business interests than the younger group. Both groups indicated that there was a lack of planned activities for teens.

As discussion continued, members recognized that there were areas of direct conflict between the two groups as well as areas of agreement. Each group had interests that did not seem to concern the other.

Finally, the chapter selected the five most often stated problem areas of the community and listed them as follows:

Establishment of a teen recreation center.
Improved police protection.
Improving highway safety.
Need for land use zoning.
Improved sewage disposal.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

We have just studied how one FFA chapter identified the most commonly expressed problems of their community. You can do the same by following these steps.

Determing what is good about your community.

It is always a good idea to start on a positive note. The following check list will help determine what class members think of their community.

Performance check list:

- ☐ Determine in a committee meeting whether activity should take place in classroom or chapter meeting.
- ☐ List at least three things each member likes about their community.
- ☐ Have each member report his or her list.
- ☐ Copy the combined list from the chalkboard.

Determining what we like about other communities.

It is usually a good idea to see how other people have solved their problems before we jump into solving our own. This activity should help you see how other people are handling their problems.

Performance check list:

- ☐ Determine in committee meeting whether the activity should take place in classroom or chapter meeting.
- ☐ List at least three things each member likes about other communities.
- ☐ Have each member report his or her list.
- ☐ Record each item on the chalkboard. If an item appears more than once, a check mark is placed after the item rather than rewriting the item.
- ☐ Copy the combined list from the chalkboard.

Determining what needs to be improved in our community.

It seems less negative to ask what needs to be improved rather than to ask what we dislike about our community. The following check list can serve as a guide in identifying the problem areas.

- ☐ Determine in committee meeting whether activity should take place in classroom or Chapter meeting.
- ☐ Have each member list at least three things about his or her community they would like to see improved.
- ☐ Have each member report his or her list.
- ☐ Record each item on the chalkboard. If an item appears more than once, place a check mark after the item rather than rewriting the item.
- ☐ Copy the combined list from the chalkboard.

Determining what other community members think about our community.

No matter how active your chapter may be, it cannot work alone in solving the problems of the community. The following check list will assist you in obtaining the help of other community members.

- ☐ Organize members into interviewing teams of two members each.
- ☐ Identify the questions to be asked by the interviewing teams.

What do you like about your community?
What do you like about other communities with which you are familiar?
What do you think needs improving in our community?

- ☐ Select a representative sampling of the community of the different kinds of individuals and groups. Refer to the listing of key people and organizations developed when the Chapter defined its community.
- ☐ Assign each interviewing team a fair share of persons to be interviewed.
- ☐ Train interviewing teams to arrange for and conduct their interviews.
  - ☐ Make appointments with person to be interviewed.
  - ☐ Have interviewing teams identify themselves to persons being interviewed by stating:
    - ☐ Who they are.
    - ☐ Who they represent.
    - ☐ Why the interview is being conducted.
    - ☐ How long the interview will last. (15-20 min.) (Make the person to be interviewed feel that it is important.)
    - ☐ What is to be done with information.
  - ☐ Ask the specified questions. Listen intently but keep person on the subject. Make the person being interviewed feel at ease.
  - ☐ Request permission if interview is to be recorded or notes taken.
  - ☐ Respect the time the person being interviewed is given to you.
  - ☐ Role play the interview.
  - ☐ Report the response received for each of the three questions.
  - ☐ Record each response on the chalkboard. If an item appears more than once, place a check mark after the item rather than rewriting the item. Consider each of the three questions separately.
  - ☐ Copy the combined list for each question from the chalkboard. Now the secretary should have three separate lists giving what other community members:
    Like about their community.
    Like about other communities.
    Think needs improving in our own community.

Determining common problem areas in the community.

The following check list should assist you in identifying community problem areas.

- ☐ Compare the combined member response with the combined response from the community survey.
  - ☐ Note areas of similarity.
  - ☐ Note areas of differences.
  - ☐ Note areas concerning one group, but not concerning the other.
- ☐ Use the combined list to select *the five* most often stated community problems.

Glossary

Interview – A technique used to get information from selected people on a particular subject or topic. Usually interviews are conducted face to face.

Cross Section of Community – The members of the community are divided into their different categories according to their occupations, interested groups, education, and social background. Representative samples are taken from each group so that the entire community is represented without interviewing each person in the community.

Community Problem – An area of interest in the community which has a great difference between the way it exists now and the way the people of the community would like to see it after bringing about desirable changes.

Supporting References:

Del Dyer and Gene McMurty, *4-H/CRD Youth in Action Improving Their Communities*, Publication 486, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Revised 1973.
R. Thomas Harp, *Improving Communications*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210.
Paul R. Vaughn, *Outstanding Citizenship*, Ohio Agricultural Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210.
Paul R. Vaughn, *Working With Others*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210.
Paul R. Vaughn, *Personality Pointers*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210.

CHAPTER III. SELECTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

After selecting the five most often listed improvements for their community from a much larger list, the Lake Chapter still had much too large a list. The next step was to further reduce the list to the two improvement ideas the chapter members would like to know more about.

In making such a selection it is important that a majority of the chapter members agree since members must be willing to work on the selected projects.

Decision making by groups such as your FFA chapter can be done in several different ways. Generally, good decision making involves most of the membership. Let us consider three methods that might be used by chapters.

The will of a few

In this method the chapter advisor and the chapter officers, in an executive committee meeting, make the decision. This means that only the five chapter officers are a part of the decision making process. The rest of the chapter members have no part in the process. Do you think the project will be successful?

Majority vote

Here the appropriate committee recommends a course of action to the entire chapter membership. The committee chairman makes the report to the chapter and moves that the project be undertaken. After a brief discussion the project is accepted or rejected by a majority vote of the members. Do you think the project will be successful?

Majority vote means that at least one more than half of the voting members agree upon a decision.

The majority vote is generally used for hard decisions such as the election of officers.

Consensus

A third method is to submit a proposal to the entire group then – through discussion – reach a general agreement or consensus of opinion. The consensus method is best where success of the project is dependent on support of most of the chapter members.

The Chapter Advisor can help the chapter in going through the consensus process by giving them

the following instructions:

1. Give your opinions as you think they should be and do not argue for your point. Be objective in reaching your position. Do not state your prejudices. Your opinions are based upon facts, and you must consider the opinions and facts stated by others.
2. Do not change your mind just to reach an agreement and avoid an argument. Change your mind only when you think you should.
3. Consider differences of opinions as helpful in bringing out information.
4. Avoid making decisions by majority vote. Voting is done only to indicate how near the group is to general agreement.
5. Ask those opposed to the idea to state their reasons when the group is not in agreement.
6. Have the entire group make adjustments in their opinions until general agreement for or against the idea is reached.
7. Take a formal vote when it is obvious that general

agreement has been reached. This decision should be unanimous or nearly so and should be recorded by the secretary.

What do you think are the chances of success of this decision making process as compared to the other two?

As a result of studying this section you should learn to select by consensus (from the list of five needed community improvements) the two improvements that most chapter members would like to know more about.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There are, no doubt, several different ways a chapter might arrive at a consensus. Here's how the Lake FFA Chapter reached a consensus.

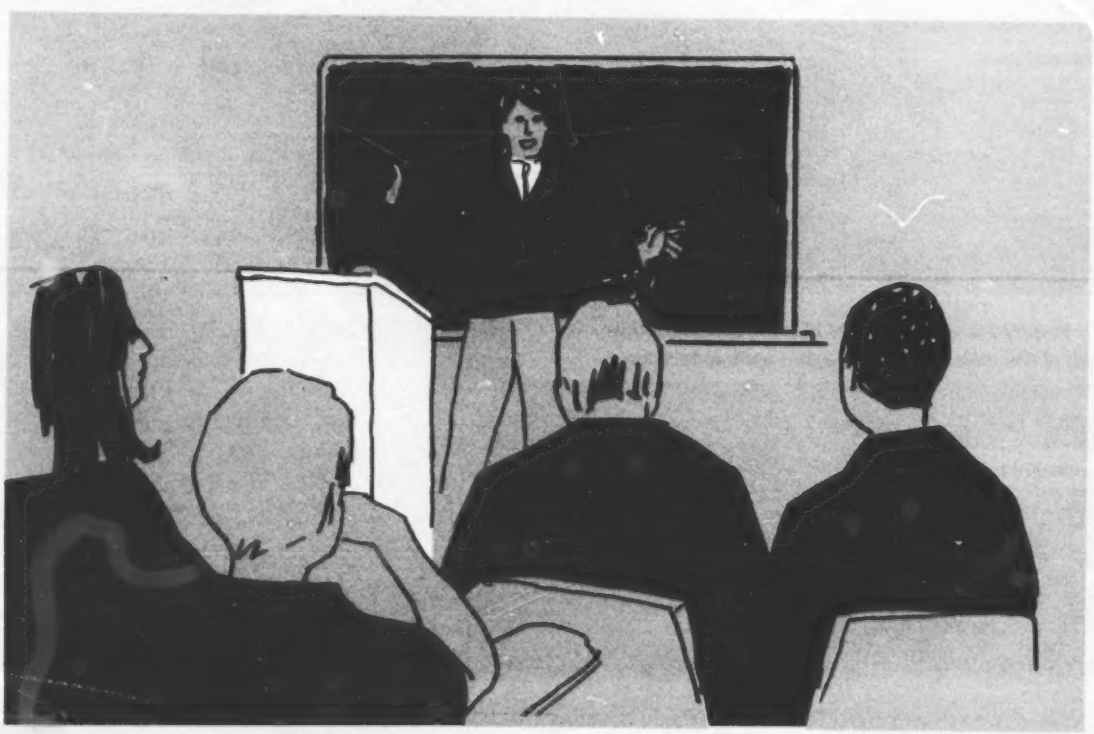
Step I – The advisor and the chapter executive committee decided that the selection of the two community improvement project suggestions would best be done during a chapter meeting. If the selection was made during class time the group could not meet together.

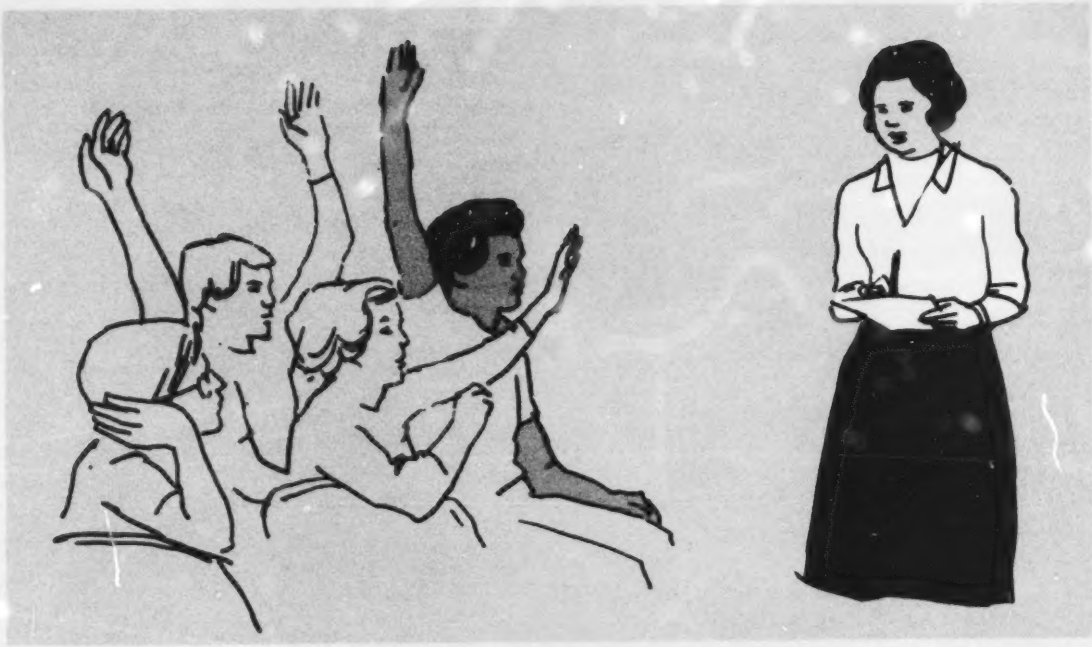
Step II – The community service committee chairman listed the five most stated problem areas on the chalkboard:

1. Establishment of a teen recreation center.
2. Improved police protection.
3. Improved highway safety.
4. Need for land use zoning.
5. Improved sewage disposal.

Step III – The chapter was divided into small groups of three each. Each small group was instructed to select, by consensus, the two problem areas they would like to know more about. (The introductions given by the advisor in the introduction were to be followed.)

The team members were instructed to be objective by considering the opinions expressed by their fellow members and by community representatives during previous meetings. They were also requested to base their opinions upon fact and not prejudices. Each member had the responsibility of gathering facts and applying them to the problem.





Step IV – Each small group made verbal presentations to the chapter membership. They gave their selection along with the reasons why they thought support should be given their choice. One member gave the report while the other two added anything they felt was left out.

Step V – The selections reported by each small group was recorded on the chalkboard. The small groups favored the following three problem areas:

1. Establishment of a teen recreation center.
2. Improved police protection.
3. Need for land use zoning.

Step VI – The entire chapter used the consensus process to select the two problem areas of most concern. During the discussion those who supported *improved police protection* conceded that they probably could not do much about such a project.

Step VII – When it was apparent to the chapter president, by observing the discussion and the recording on the chalkboard, that the majority of the members had settled on two proposed problem areas, a vote was taken.

The vote was unanimous in favor of obtaining more information about the following two problem areas:

1. Establishment of a teen recreation center.
2. Development of a land use zoning system.

Since every member was involved in the decision making process, continued support of the community development project should be expected.

This does not mean to imply that a unanimous decision can always be reached by the consensus process.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

We have just seen the process one FFA chapter used – the consensus of opinion process – to select the two most needed community improvements from the list of five improvements previously identified.

Performance Checklist:

- ☐ Decide whether the activity should take place during class periods or during an FFA meeting.
- ☐ List the five identified problem areas of the community on the blackboard or display on a

bulletin board.

- ☐ Divide the chapter into small committees or sub-groups of two or three members to determine two areas of greatest concern from the list of five already compiled.
- ☐ Agree by consensus in sub-groups on the two areas of greatest concern to the community.
- ☐ Have sub-groups make verbal presentations to the chapter about their choices of community problems of greatest concern.
- ☐ Place on chalkboard the problem areas selected by each sub-group.
- ☐ Open the meeting to the entire membership for discussion.
- ☐ Give each member the opportunity to state his position or to ask questions before all other members.
- ☐ Have the chairperson observe the tone of the discussion and poll the group from time to time to determine how near they are to reaching a consensus.
- ☐ Have the chairperson call for a formal vote when most members appear to be in agreement. Record the vote in the minutes.
- ☐ Display on the bulletin board the two community improvement projects identified as needing more study.

Glossary

Consensus – A process by which a group comes to a general agreement on a course of action.

Compatible – Means in agreement with or consistent with one's own decisions.

Majority vote – Means at least one more than half of the votes cast.

Unanimous decision – Means that all are in agreement on the decision.

Objectivity – Means being able to see all sides of the problem and helping others to do the same.

Supporting References

Del Dyer and Gene McMurtry, *4-H/CRD Youth in Action Improving Their Communities*, Publication 486, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Revised 1973.

Don W. Littrell, *The Theory and Practice of Community Development*, MP 184, Extension Division, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

R. Thomas Harp, *Effective Committees*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

Paul R. Vaughn, *Conducting Meetings*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

Paul R. Vaughn, *Outstanding Citizenship*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

Paul R. Vaughn, *Working With Others*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210

CHAPTER IV. GATHERING AND ANALYZING INFORMATION

Throughout our lives we are faced with many difficult decisions. Some of these decisions are minor while others will have a great effect on the remainder of our lives. To make these decisions wisely we must gather all available information, determine the alternatives, then, select the course of action that seems best for us.

FFA chapters and other organizations must also make difficult decisions. To make these decisions they must determine what information is needed and sources from which it can be obtained.

You will recall that the two most needed community improvements identified by the FFA Chapter members were:

1. Establishment of a teen recreation center.
2. Development of a land use zoning plan.

FFA members and those contacted in the community interviews all indicated a lack of planned activities for the youth of Lake Township. The members noted, however, that the adult community tended to be more interested in cultural and business activities.

In deciding *which of the two community improvements will be acted upon as a community development project,* the chapter outlined the following activities:

1. Gather factual information about both problem areas.
2. Determine the sources of information and how it will be provided:
   - ☐ Outside resource persons as speakers for chapter meetings.
   - ☐ Interviews and reports by FFA members.
   - ☐ Tours and trips.
   - ☐ Library research and study.
   - ☐ Experts on the subject who live in the community.
3. Test the *credibility* and quality of the information.
4. Redefine the two problems based on the information collected.
5. Select one problem to be acted upon.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

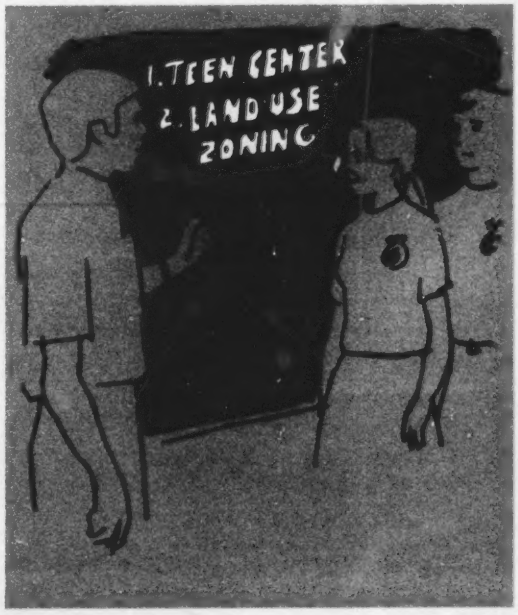
Which of the two community improvements will become the goal of the Lake FFA Chapter and the people in the community – establishment of a teen recreation center or initiation of a land use zoning system?

Let's proceed with the decision-making plan so that a project can be selected and action on the project can begin.

Gathering facts about the problem areas

To make a sound decision, it is not necessary that decision-makers have all the facts. It is necessary, however, to know what facts are missing so that allowances can be made for gaps in the information. Knowledge of the facts also helps the decision-makers determine the degree of flexibility required when decisions are made. A *general rule* in decision-making is that the decision must be an adequate solution to the problem.

The chapter's activities are now moving into the information-gathering stage. The objective is to gather as much sound and accurate information as possible. It is important at this point that FFA members recognize the "real" problem in order to know what information is available and where it can be obtained. A problem well identified is more than half solved. In other words, members know what is wrong, then they can try to do something about it.



The chapter members soon found that they needed help in identifying the information they needed about each problem area. In working with the teen center, a committee was appointed to seek help from such persons as the high school coach, ministers, the priest, the county 4-H club leader, the superintendent of schools, and other such people. They made the following list of questions:

1. What is the situation in the community in regard to adequacy of recreation facilities – playground, picnic places, play equipment, meeting hall, gymnasium or game room, sports field, and courts?
2. Where do most of the young people go for most of their play and recreation?
3. Are there any regularly planned social activities for the youth of the community?
4. What are the major interests and needs of the young people?
5. Does the school make its recreation facilities available for use by the community groups or youth?
6. Who are the community leaders who can assist in youth recreation projects?
7. How much financing is required and how could this financing be obtained?
8. What efforts have been made in the past to provide recreational facilities for youth?
9. Would the community support the idea of providing a teen recreation center?
10. What are the community problems likely to arise from a teen center?

In working with the problem about land use zoning, a second committee was appointed to work with the township trustees, the county land use planning commission, and other such persons and organizations. They identified the following questions:

1. Is the community incorporated and operating under local elected officials?
2. What zoning ordinances are presently in effect in the community?
   a. To afford protection against aesthetic nuisances?
   b. For the protection of morals?
   c. For protection against physical danger?
   d. For protection against environmental nuisances?
   e. For protection of light, air, and open space?
3. Are there any subdivision controls presently in effect for residential and industrial expansion?
4. What, if any, are the building codes for the community?
5. Does the local government have the authority (eminent domain) to condemn property for growth?
6. What is the real estate tax policy in the community?
7. Does the community have a planning commission or zoning commission in effect?
8. Are Zoning regulations in accordance with the master plan for the development of the community?
9. What are the attitudes of the public toward local government and local officials?
10. State and Federal regulations.

Gathering Information

The chapter decided to have the same two committees conduct the actual study, since they were acquainted with the people who helped them identify the questions. Some methods used by the committees to collect information for consideration by the chapter were:

Contact resource persons – One of the quickest and most effective ways of doing research is to contact individuals whose job or study resulted in a large amount of factual information that can be made available to FFA members at a chapter meeting. Some of these people may live outside the community.

Conduct interviews – FFA members may choose to conduct interviews with resource persons, then report this information to other chapter members. This approach not only provides information to student interviewers, but also makes community leaders aware of the interest and concern of the youth in the community.

Arrange for tours and trips – To fully understand a particular problem in a community, it may be necessary to conduct a tour or trip so that persons can observe existing conditions. An on-site investigation may reveal information that otherwise would have been overlooked.

Conduct library research – Research done in the school or public library may reveal facts that can be used to make the right decisions. There may be other institutions or public service organizations in the community which can also provide helpful information. Try to use every available source of information in the community.

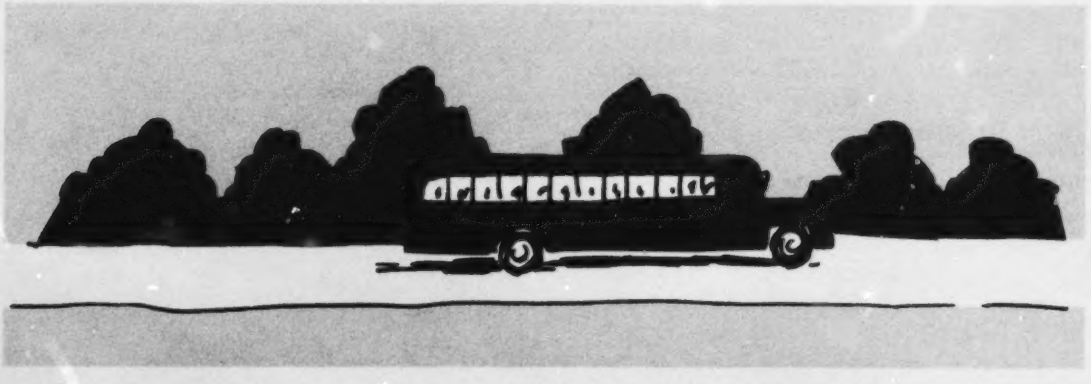
Contact "experts" who live in the community – Usually there are persons in the community who have worked on the same problem previously or who had a similar experience in another place. Conversations with these "experts" often reveals solutions to the problem. Using their experience and advice often speeds the decision-making process.

Testing the credibility and quality of information

It is important that the information applied to a problem or its proposed solution be highly credible. That is, the information must be accurate and present all sides of an issue. Reliable sources of information are the basis for credibility. In every problem situation, look first at the reliability of the information before using it for decisions. A study group that lacks credibility weakens people's confidence in its ability to help the community. Credibility is a precious commodity which must be understood and protected.

When listening to experts or discussing the problem with other knowledgeable individuals, it is important to know the speakers' biases and values. Their biases (preferences) and values may influence their entire way of looking at a problem. It is possible that the values and biases they hold would work in opposition to a solution of the problem.

Before the chapter decides to proceed on the basis of the information delivered by an individual or a small group, these biases and values must be determined. They can be determined through vigorous questioning. Such inquiry will also reveal whether or not the person(s) being questioned has accurate information.



Presenting the information and redefining the problems

After the two committees gathered the required information and tested its credibility, they shared it with the entire chapter. After the required information is gathered, the problems can be redefined. For example, if a majority of the youth in the community liked the idea of a teen center, the chapter might feel encouraged to select this project. However, if the costs were too high, chapter members might veto this project. Also, if the majority of the people feared the effects of zoning, this issue would be an unlikely target for a chapter project.

The crucial questions which many groups fail to ask themselves at this point are:

1. Who is going to pay for the new improvements? and,
2. Who is going to benefit from them?

For example, if the chapter members are the only persons who stand to benefit from the proposed activity, then it is somewhat absurd to expect community residents to involve themselves in the project. It is doubly absurd if the FFA chapter is the only group which will benefit and it expects some other group to pay for the improvements.

Selecting the one problem to be acted upon

Now that all of the members have been thoroughly informed about the two problem areas under consideration, they should be ready to make a decision about the one problem area to be acted upon.

Each member was given an opportunity to express his or her ideas about both problem areas.

Each member understood what their involvement would be in the project and what would be expected of them once the selected project was underway.

At this point it is desirable that members reach a consensus about the one problem area to act upon as the chapter's community development activity for the school year. The idea is to arrive at a decision that everyone can agree upon and support in action.

(1) As a result of their study the consensus of chapter members was that the community was not ready for zoning. (2) They agreed that the project to receive top priority would be the *establishment of a teen recreation center.* (3) Citizens in Lake Township gave verbal support to the youth in this decision.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

We have just studied some of the procedures followed by one FFA chapter in selecting a community development project suitable to both the community and the chapter. You may wish to use the following check list to help your chapter gather information and select a suitable project for your community.

1. Gather factual information about the two problem areas selected.

- ☐ Appoint committees to study the two problems.
- ☐ Seek assistance of resource persons in identifying the questions to which they need answers.
- ☐ Develop a list of questions that must be answered in order to make a decision.
- ☐ Develop a list of resource persons and their occupation or special knowledge for each of the problem areas.

- ☐ Collect information for each problem area using the most appropriate methods.
  - ☐ Conduct interviews with the resource persons. Record the desired information.
  - ☐ Arrange for resource persons to speak to a chapter meeting.
  - ☐ Arrange for tours and trips to observe other solutions to similar problems.
  - ☐ Conduct library research.
  - ☐ Contact persons within or near the community who have had previous experience in solving similar problems.
  - ☐ Others.

Conclusions

Categorize the information collected into different areas such as:

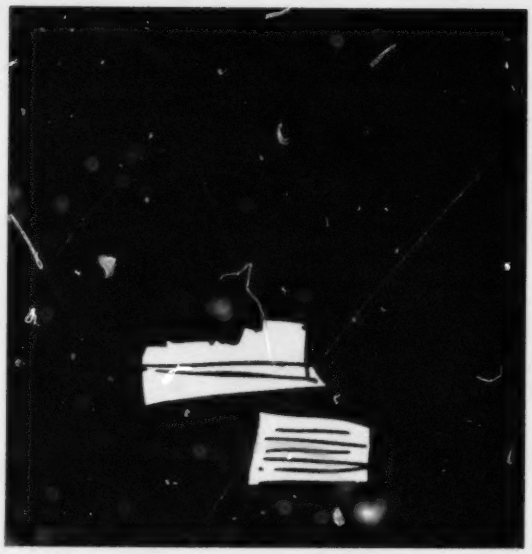
Technical information which gives specifications and standards.

Statistical information concerning how people reacted under situations similar to the problem areas.

Personal Opinions expressed by community residents.

Financial information concerning costs and sources of income.

2. Test the credibility and quality of the information.
- ☐ Check the accuracy of information provided by resource persons when possible. In some cases this may be done by checking public records. Other information may be checked against accepted standards established by trade association, research organizations, or government.
- ☐ Separate factual information from opinions expressed by individuals.
- ☐ Determine if information about all sides of the problems has been obtained. Is the information favorable, unfavorable, or neutral as far as the problem is concerned?
- ☐ Determine whether or not the resource person was biased for or against the problem being studied. By asking questions the interviewer can determine whether or not the person has biases concerning the problem. In some cases the person's values may keep them from supporting an issue.



Conclusions

Evaluate each piece of useful information to determine technical accuracy and whether or not the information is biased for or against the problem.

3. Present the information to the chapter members and redefine the problem.
- ☐ Have each committee present a detailed report of the information gathered.
- ☐ Restate the problem if the information gathered causes the problem areas to look different.
- ☐ Determine who is going to pay for the improvements.
- ☐ Determine who is going to benefit from the improvements.
  - Directly
  - Indirectly

Conclusions

Clearly state each problem in light of the information gathered. Identify who will pay for the improvements and who will benefit from them.

4. Select the one problem to be acted upon.
- ☐ Have each chapter member specifically express

any feelings, opinions, or information he has concerning the projects.

- ☐ Inform each chapter member what his or her duties and responsibilities would be for each of the problem areas being considered.
- ☐ Have the community development committee check again with community leaders to determine if they still have their support.
- ☐ Decide by vote of chapter members which of the problems (if either) will be selected as a chapter community development project.

Conclusions

The decision reached should represent the best thinking of the chapter members. Support by community leaders must also be present. If the project is to succeed, all of the chapter members will have to do their fair share of the work.

Glossary:

Credibility – Reliability or dependability. Is the information true?

Land Use Zoning – Zoning in this instance means the division of a municipality or county into districts for the purpose of regulating the location and use of buildings, land, and building construction.

Biases – An inclination to favor one's own decisions; prejudice. Opinions based upon feelings rather than fact.

Supporting References

Del Dyer and Gene McMurtry, *4-H/CRD Youth in Action Improving Their Communities*, Publication 486, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Revised 1973.

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Section II Group Decisions & Actions

CHAPTER V. EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

The Lake FFA Chapter decided to establish a teen recreation center as their community development project. Their next step was to determine ways the project might be carried out. As with most problems there can be more than one solution. Now it's up to the chapter to identify the possible solutions and select the one best suited to their situation.

Here's how the Lake FFA Chapter proceeded.

In studying this section and by making the practical applications, you would learn to do the following:

- To identify several ways that you might solve your problem in community development.
- To examine each solution in order to determine if it is correct under the following standards – Technical, Economical, Social, Political, and Moral.
- To determine if adequate resources are available to help solve the problem.
- To identify who benefits and who pays when you solve your problem.
- To determine if you have chosen the best methods for solving the problem.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

At a chapter meeting the president turned the meeting over the the BOAC Chairman, to gather ideas and suggestions on how the teen center could be built. The chairman asked the secretary to record the suggestions on the chalkboard. After the list was developed, the BOAC Chairman and his committee met separately to carefully analyze each suggestion. They were instructed to report at the next meeting on the best possible solution for building the teen center.

In analyzing the list the committee discussed several possible solutions: (a) build a new teen center using student labor; (b) build a new teen center with the community assistance; (c) make the community center a chapter financed project built by a local contractor (e) renovate a building donated by a local merchant and (d) use the school building as a teen center.

The committee examined these alternatives to determine if they were: (a) practical, (b) financially feasible, (c) accepted by the community, (d) met the local codes for community facilities and (e) morally sound.

The BOAC committee must now consider which solution best serves the interests and needs of the community residents. They must determine sources from which money might be obtained, how much money is needed, and a method of repayment. After examining different financial sources, they compared the solutions with available amounts of money. Certainly, financial considerations have a major effect on the type of structure which can be constructed. For example, community members learned from a contractor that a new building would cost $40,000. Although the new building might be preferable, the committee located an old store which could be renovated for $2,500. This seemed a more practical solution, based upon the available funds and community assistance.

As they examined these two solutions chapter members determined that the renovated store would meet the basic needs of a teen center and could be adequately financed by the chapter with pledged donations from two civic organizations and a $500 donation from the local bank.

In justifying the decision that the renovated store is the best location for the teen recreation center the committee considered these questions:

Technically correct –

- Would the building meet fire inspection and sanitation code requirements?
- Does it have adequate parking space?
- Is it large enough to meet all members needs?

Economically possible –

- What maintenance and upkeep costs should be considered? (heat, lights, painting, etc.)
- What is the cost of taxes and insurance?
- Is the project within the capability of the chapter and potential assistance both financially and in manpower needs?

Socially Acceptable –

- Is the location such that activities held at the center would not be disturbing to the neighborhood.
- Is this facility available to all youth in the community?
- Will the center serve other groups in the community?

Politically Right–

– Have you discussed the project with local government officials to determine future plans for community facilities.
– Is this the best time to initiate this project with assurance that adequate help will be available?
– Have you discussed the project with your parents and others? What is their reaction?
– What are the reactions of civic, religious and municipal organizations?
– Do school administrators favor a teen center at this location?

Morally Correct– (Can it be properly managed?)

– How are you going to control activities held at this center? How will you control alcoholism, mischief? Who will schedule meetings, plan activities and be in charge of paying bills?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In this chapter on alternative solutions, you were presented an outline of the procedure for developing an action plan. You discussed the development of a strategy for action and you learned that it is important to ask specific questions regarding alternative solutions. Now your chapter should be ready to use the following procedure to develop strategies for your own community development programs.

Performance Check List

- ☐ Have a "brainstorming" session at a chapter meeting and make solutions to the problem.
- ☐ Submit your list to the community development committee.
  - ☐ Select three or four of the best possible solutions from the brainstorm list.
  - ☐ Determine whether the project will be conducted by the FFA alone or initiated and carried out in cooperation with other groups.
- ☐ Analyze the suggested solutions to determine if they are:
  - ☐ Technically correct.
  - ☐ Economically possible.
  - ☐ Socially accepted.
  - ☐ Politically feasible.
  - ☐ Morally correct.
- ☐ Determine what people in the community think about the possible solutions. Are they timely, practical, and best for the majority in the community?
- ☐ Determine if the resources are available for each option.
  - ☐ Is money available?
  - ☐ Are people available to assist?
  - ☐ Do the people support the program?
  - ☐ Is technical assistance available?
  - ☐ Do you have time to do it?
  - ☐ Is it practical?
- ☐ Examine each solution in terms of:
  - ☐ Who benefits?
  - ☐ Who pays?
- ☐ After you've narrowed the options to two or three, determine what must be done to carry out each option. For each option:
  - ☐ What individuals and groups need to be involved?
  - ☐ Can these tasks be accomplished by available human resources?
- ☐ Determine which if any of the solutions is feasible.

Glossary:

Alternative solutions – Different procedures which may be followed in solving a problem.

Resources – The money, the technical ability, the materials, the human support, the time, the space, and the labor required to apply the solution to the problem.

Brainstorm – Every member of a group is made to feel free to blurt out any possible solution that comes to mind. The member is not to be ridiculed even if his suggestion is funny or foolish.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES

Del Dyer and Gene McMurty, *4-H/CRD Youth in Action Improving Their Communities*, Publication, 486, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Revised, 1973.
R. Thomas Harp, *Effective Committees*, Ohio Agricultural Education Curriculum Materials Service, Room 254, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

CHAPTER VI. ORGANIZING FOR ACTION

After the Lake Chapter determined how they would go about establishing a teen center, they realized more than ever that they needed help from many individuals and organizations.

From their surveys of community residents and organizations they also realized that some residents favored the teen center while others had no opinion, and a few were opposed to the idea.

In studying this section and by making the practical applications, you should learn to do the following:

1. List the individuals and groups who will be affected by the *action*.
2. Decide on four or five individuals or organizations who are most willing to support the activity. Develop a strategy for gaining their support.
3. Gather other people to the causes by:
   Telling friends.
   Using mass media.
   Producing brochures.
   Speaking to groups.
4. Mobilize resources.
   People
   Materials
   Dollars
5. Develop an action plan including who does what.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Past experience tells us that if we want to accomplish something to the best of our ability, then we must have a plan. When we have an action project and we want to involve people, we need a well-thought-out plan. It should include not only what your chapter plans to do, but *how other people might react to the plan.*

Developing an Action Plan and Assigning Responsibilities

The Lake FFA chapter held a meeting to set a plan of action. Included in their plan of action were the tasks to be performed, the persons responsible for each task and the person to whom each reported when the work was done. At the meeting the following questions were considered:

1. What individuals and groups will be affected by the project?

The first step in developing a plan of action was to identify those in the community who would be affected by the teen center and how they would be affected.

Although the Lake FFA Chapter members thought the development of a teen center would be desirable for the community, they also thought it might be opposed by some people. Several members pointed out that some of the restaurant and movie theaterowners might feel that the teen center would take away some of their business. Local residents who lived near the proposed teen center location might be opposed to a possible increase in noise and traffic. The chapter thought that all of these individuals should have an opportunity to hear the proposal as presently developed, express their opinions and reach some type of agreement regarding teen center activities, hours, programs, etc.

The chapter knew that all of these individuals had to be convinced that it was in their best interest to assist the chapter and the community in developing the teen center. The chapter tackled this problem by assigning a committee to determine who in the community would be affected by the project and the way in which they would be affected. When they finished, their list looked something like this:

Those who will be affected.	*How they will be affected.*
1. Local businessmen	a. Loss of business in some areas. b. Increase of business in other areas.
2. Local residents	a. Increase in noise and activities. b. Less worry about juvenile deliquency. c. Possible center of drug distribution?
3. Young people	a. More planned activities. b. Common meeting place.
4. Youth organizations, civic & church groups	a. More competing activities. b. Additional facility for use in planning activities.
5. School Officials	a. More competing activities. b. Additional facility for use in planning activities.

This information gathered by chapter members represented the first step to identify community leaders who can get the project going. Their next step

dealt with identifying people within the community who would provide support for the project.

2. Who might support the project?

There are many people within the community who, by their position or power can influence the actions of others. Any project has a much greater chance for success if these people support the plan. On the other hand, if they oppose the plan, they could cause it to fail. Because of their influence, a few words from these leaders, for or against, will have a tremendous impact on the success or failure of a project.

The Lake FFA Chapter identified these individuals by asking community residents this question: "If you needed help in making decisions affecting the community, whose judgement would you value the most?" As they tallied the results of the survey chapter members noticed that some names were repeated often in the surveys. They made a list of the names that appeared most often and determined that these people must be "opinion leaders" in the community.

From their list of "opinion leaders" chapter members first identified those most likely to have a favorable reaction to their proposal. In making their decision they considered the person's willingness to stand by their group when the plan of action was implemented. They also considered resource persons who had been involved in earlier discussions of proposals as well as government officials, local businessmen and farmers.

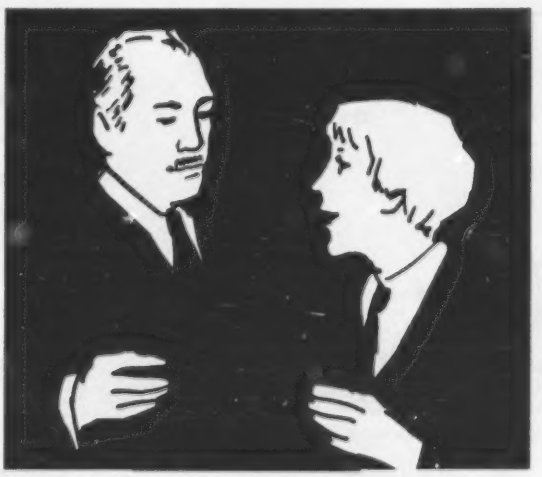
In gaining support for the project, attention must also be given to other people besides key individuals. Remember the chapter prepared a list of individuals who would be affected by the project. The chapter also needed their support to make the project a reality. The chapter solved this problem by selecting chapter members to meet with those who would be affected and to explain the benefits of a teen center. In this manner, they not only convinced people of the need for the center, but they also gathered information which would be helpful in establishing the center itself.

The Lake Chapter found that most of the youth organizations were in favor of their project and many offered to help. The local ministerial association also backed the project and enlisted support of their congregations. A local farm building contractor also offered assistance in the form of technical advice and help when needed. Best of all the local merchants were convinced that the teen center might help rather than hinder business so they at least developed a wait and see attitude. The chapter members continued with other segments of the community until they had strong support from a half dozen groups and individuals.

3. How do we gain other people's support?

To gain the support of the "key individuals" chapter members realized they must have answers to many questions before they made their approach for support. Before chapter members made their visits they did their homework by obtaining the answers to questions like these: What kind of facility was being planned. What problems are associated with operating a teen center? What are planned solutions to these problems?

A special research committee was assigned the task of gathering information. They used the library, local and state agencies, and a neighboring teen center as resources for obtaining information. Using lists of key persons and organizations prepared earlier, chapter members mobilized in teams to begin contacting key individuals and groups in the community. They also began telling other people about the project. It was easy since they had to tell as many different people as possible, why the project was necessary and why the procedure the chapter had chosen was the best way of achieving the goal.



The Lake FFA Chapter gave this responsibility to their Public Relations Committee. The committee prepared a public relations schedule which included three radio programs, one television show, several newspaper articles, and a number of presentations by members at several civic club meetings.

5. What are the resources available?

The next step was to gather the people, materials, and finances to start the project. The people to help with the remodeling and redecorating were identified from the youth organizations and contractor. The materials and equipment were also obtained from the contractor and local hardware store. The money was a grant for a community improvement project, chapter funds from the sale of citrus fruits, and help from a local civic club.

6. How is a Plan of Action Developed?

Fund raising, site location, designing a system, deciding on activities, and staffing the facility once it is underway—all require the involvement of people and commitment of resources such as money, materials, and ideas. The Lake Chapter developed a list of these activities then listed the people and organizations that could help with each. The list was developed at the same time as the campaign to explain the teen center to the community. As they proceeded with the project, chapter members quickly learned that those who would most benefit from the teen center were the ones most willing to work on its development.

As part of the plan of action, the chapter realized they must set goals and have a time table for completion. The members first identified their goals as:

1. Raise funds for the teen center.
2. Make special arrangements with building contractors for reduced costs.
3. Organize members of the community in a self-help building program.

The goals became the basis for establishing phases of the project. The chapter set specific dates by which they planned to complete each phase. These goals also become the basis for determining responsibilities. Now the chapter was ready to carry out the project.

7. How will we manage the project?

It is a good idea to give assignments to "action teams" of two or three persons. Each action-team must have a clear, concise assignment and be able to carry it out.

Very seldom does a plan as originally designed and thought out go forward just as it was planned. Often the plan must be adjusted as various steps are completed. Some group-perhaps the FFA chapter, will need to keep close tabs on the action and modify the plan from time to time.

The planning group must maintain a central control and reporting system. This is important because certain teams may not or cannot carry through their assignments. New problems needing action teams may surface as the project develops. Therefore, some group or individual must direct the effort toward the goal.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Many community projects decided upon with enthusiasm are never completed. People and groups interested in carrying out the decision fail to understand the process or procedures critical to the project's success. Can you think of projects started in your community that were never completed? If so can you list the reasons why the project was not completed?

Researchers who have studied these "failures" and successes point out that community improvements are made *in* and *by* the community. After all, community resources of time, energy, materials, and money are

involved and the community will only support those projects it favors and thoroughly understands and defines as "good for our community."

After the action begins, people should say its "our project." And when it is finished, they should say "we did it."

You have seen how the members of one FFA chapter went about developing a plan of action for improving their community. See the following check list step by step procedure you can use in developing a plan of action for your community improvement project!

Performance Check List

- ☐ Develop a step by step plan of action.
- ☐ Decide who in the community will be affected by the action.
- ☐ Develop a listing of those who will be affected and indicate whether the effect will be seen by them as positive or negative.
- ☐ Develop a list of key individuals who can legitimize your proposed action or make suggestions about ways to proceed with your plan so it will work.
- ☐ Gather facts and necessary background information.
- ☐ Hold a meeting(s) of the FFA Chapter to hear "feedback" and suggestions from those who visited the key individuals.
- ☐ Decide whether the original strategy for action is still appropriate or whether it needs modification.
- ☐ Tell many others of your plan in such a way that they will want to see the improvement in the community.
- ☐ Get commitments from the various people and groups who want to or can be persuaded to help work toward the completion of the community improvement.
- ☐ Develop a step-by-step plan as to how the community improvement will go forward. What must be done first, second, third, etc.
- ☐ Make specific assignments for individuals and groups including information about what they are to do, when it is to be accomplished, and who is affected by the action. Also, inform them who can answer questions they may have relative to their jobs and to whom they report when a job has been completed.

Glossary

Prime Movers – The small group in a community which originally work through the definition of "need for improvement" stages and serve as initiators for action to complete the needed improvement.

Initiators – People or groups who "get the ball rolling."

Plan of Action – A step by step, well thought out (and written) way to proceed from "we want a teen center" to "the teen center is complete."

Key Individuals – People who would be particularly affected by the improvement, either benefited or disadvantaged. Also, people who could rally support from others if they were in favor of your suggested improvement.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES

Dyer, Delwyn A. and Gene McMurtry, 4-H/CRD Leaders' Guide: *Youth in Action Improving Their Communities*, VPI&SU Printing Department, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1973, 75p.

CHAPTER VII. EVALUATING THE RESULTS

Sometimes different is not better. Change for the sake of change is not always desirable. The consensus of the members of the Lake FFA Chapter was that a teen recreation center was needed and would be appreciated by the community. In the decision process of the project, the community agreed with the chapter's decision. Everyone involved in the planning and action phases of the project was convinced that a teen recreation center would be a good thing for community.

After the recreation center had been in operation for several months the chapter decided that it was time to evaluate the project results. Did the community actually change? How has it changed (both good and bad)? The FFA Committee involved in this process should accomplish the following:

1. Determine the feelings of people in the community about the teen center and its benefits to the community.
   a. In what ways is the community better?
   b. In what ways is the community worse?
2. Look at the total process by which the group accomplished the project.
   a. How did the chapter decide on the course of action.
   b. Was the community actively involved in the decision on the need for the center.
   c. Was the community involved in the establishment of the center.
3. How can this process be used on other needs of the community.
4. Discuss ways in which the experiences and sets of information gathered throughout this project can be shared with others in the community.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The community is a living idea. You have already learned that a community is people; people's problems, wants, and desires; physical structures; institutions; culture and folkways; or value systems. Communities are constantly changing because people change. Communities are dynamic and lifelike.

People usually do not want the same things. They do not hold the same desires, and do not see their wants and desires served in exactly the same way by community services, institutions, and programs. Thus, when one looks at a community at any given point in time, what he sees is loosely organized groups of people and organizations with a partly stable organization or balance. As one studies the community and its citizens he may find as many opposed to the idea of a teen center as are for it. Thus, a balance exists between those for and against an issue.

The above situation was not true (about a teen center, that is) in the Lake community. People there wanted a teen recreation center. The FFA chapter took the lead by helping the community reach a decision and carry that decision on to action. No doubt they learned a great deal about the dynamics of their community, about how decisions are made, and how major community projects are organized and completed. They are probably feeling good about the outcome and its affect on the community.

Assessing Affect

In evaluating a project, groups should avoid jumping to conclusions, and should try to make several observations to determine the attitudes of the community. Sometimes individuals and groups tend to see what they hoped to find rather than examine the results analytically and objectively.

Several evaluation techniques can be used. The most readily available source of information is your own group. By the end of the project, however, this may be the most biased source of information. This would be particularly true if the group had in their opinion experienced, a smashing success or a dismal failure. Keeping good notes and saving all work sheets will help the group remain objective in its evaluation process.

A second useful technique is to ask members of the resource team or other community action observers, (such as a newspaper editor or an outstanding community leader) to give your group the benefit of their observations and thoughts about the conduct of the community improvement project.

A third technique (especially useful for determining the views on whether or not the efforts of the group were beneficial) is to poll several people in the community.

Questions To Be Answered

Whether we are attempting to determine the success of

the teen center or the success of any other event, it is always a good idea to look at the broader picture. What did the members of the FFA chapter set out to do in their community? Was it to create a teen center? To win an award or recognition for the chapter? Or was it to learn about their community and in the process to make it a better place in which to live? Consider the effect of the project on these groups:

Yourselves— Did you and your group grow as individuals? Did you gain an awareness of community problems and the dynamic forces at work to keep a community from problem-solving? Did you and your group develop an understanding of how to solve community problems and how to look for problem-solving resources?

The Group as a Working Unit— Did it share in work and play? Did each person learn to lead, to follow, to pull side-by-side? Did the group learn to work with other groups, both those supporting, and those opposing its plan?

The Community Development Process— Did you take each step in turn? Did you skip steps and have to back up or find other ways to overcome the problem? Do you better understand what communities are and how they operate?

The Community— Is it a better place in which to live because of your action? Are people more cooperative, more concerned, more involved because of the action you and your group initiated?

The successful realization of the desired change by use of the plan is not always a good measure of the success of the entire project. If you have developed a desire on the part of your group members to involve themselves more seriously in the affairs of the community and a desire on the part of the community to involve the youth in activities from which they had previously been excluded, then you may conclude that your efforts have been successful.

Looking Ahead

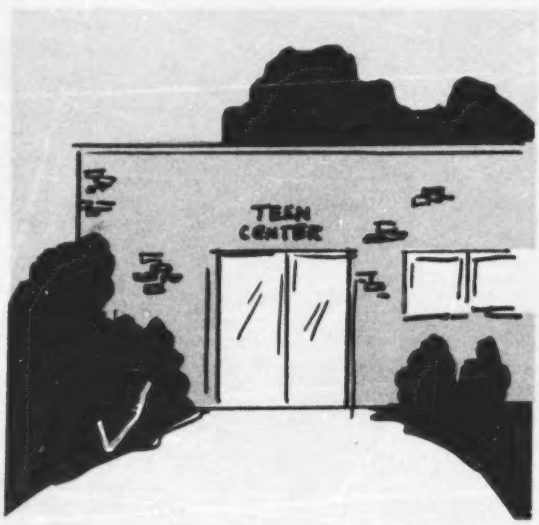
Prime movers of a community development effort become some of the most knowledgable people about the dynamics of their community. The members of the Lake FFA Chapter, in our illustrations, is a prime mover in the community. Your chapter is in the same position if it has just completed a project in the community. It is impossible to complete a community action program and not, in the process, accumulate a storehouse of knowledge about the community and its future ability to solve problems.

The question is, what is to become of this valuable information. What will the FFA members do with it? What will you do? How will you use your new knowledge of the community action process.

- non-involvement in community?
- community observations; watching others?
- new involvements and continued learning about community and about community problem-solving?
- compilation of a list of problems in priority and presentation of this to the community for whatever action it cares to initiate?
- encourage others to join in solving community problems?

At the very least, the members owe it to themselves and others to share the unfinished, unsolved things they would like to see improved in their community. Such an activity would not be complete without some statement from your group about who should undertake each suggested improvement.

If the group decides to forge ahead on a new



project, you have but to turn this book to page one and begin again. The second time around is always more relaxing, more enjoyable, but just as exciting.

Performance Check List

- ☐ Set a time when your group and selected individuals from other sectors of the community can meet and evaluate the method of conducting the community development project.
- ☐ Assign individuals to develop reports on various steps in the total project including what was done and what affect that activity seemed to have on the overall project. These reports will probably be an important part of the evaluation meeting.
- ☐ Hold an initial evaluation meeting. After hearing reports on the various steps invite discussion for clarification and "how to do better next time" comments. At this meeting the group may want to discuss other data gathering techniques to answer the question "Is the community any better off." Such techniques are:
  a. Ask the newspaper editor or other outstanding community observers to give you the benefit of their observations about the way the community development action was handled.
  b. Poll several people in the community about their feelings on (1) the way your group proceeded, (2) the teen recreation center, and (3) what should be the next community project.
- ☐ Hold further meetings of the evaluation group as needed.
- ☐ Hold one or more meetings to decide whether or not you will take on another community improvement as "prime movers" or encourage other groups to take the lead.
- ☐ Give yourselves a "pat on the back" for the effort.

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